



LOCAL NEWS, SPORTS
AND SPECIAL EVENTS
PROGRAMS

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CHAPTER IX

LOCAL NEWS, SPORTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS PROGRAMS

News and sports programs are basic ingredients of local program building. Production of good news and sports segments is vital to the program structure of an Armed Forces Radio and Television Station.

It will be discovered that military audiences have an intense interest in news from home. This should be satisfied with a liberal quantity of well-written, well-edited state-side news, supplemented, at regular times, with shortwave news from either Los Angeles or New York. In a military area, where news is being made, local news should also be reported to the limit of security regulations. Reliable local news sources should be developed, and tape recorders and cameras put to work as a regular daily functional part of the over-all operation.

Commercial newsmen, aware of competitive media, will take pride in achieving "firsts" or "scoops." Armed Forces Radio and Television Stations must be alert to cover timely events, where security permits, but greater consideration must be placed on factors of accuracy, authenticity and security. Sensationalism, poor taste, involved details, must be avoided. Radio and television news production should be alert, smooth flowing and authoritative.

News broadcasts should be considered and scheduled as anchor points in the daily schedule. News should provide the skeleton for the programming framework around which the station Program Director can insert his other program-building aids. Broadcast times should not be changed, once the best news times have been determined.

If a story of major importance breaks, normal schedules can be disrupted, but the immediacy of radio and television should be used with discretion. Programs should be interrupted only when it is certain that the interruption will best serve the audience.

Maximum use should be made of insert materials, to keep news programs fast-paced and interesting: Brief recordings of personalities in the news, inserted for radio; appropriate still photographs added for television exposure. Care should be exercised not to give an item more time than it deserves, simply because plenty of insert material is available. The Los Angeles and New York shortwave transmissions are daily sources of such material.

In a ten or fifteen minute newscast, use of headlines is recommended:

For example: "Here are tonight's news headlines:

CONGRESS APPROPRIATES \$15 BILLION FOR DEFENSE. THE NEW YORK YANKEES ON RAMPAGE AGAIN.

These are the headlines. Now here are the details."

Immediately following should be a detailed exposition of the subject matter promised in the headlines. These details make up the body of the news broadcast and are followed with a closing, in which the stories headlined in the opening are recapped:

"You have just heard the 7 o'clock news roundup, compiled and edited by Armed Forces Radio-Television Station in Congress has just appropriated the largest peacetime military expenditure in history. The New York

Yankees make it seven in a row — with just ten days to go for the pennant.
Next news report at etc.”

News should be read intelligently, with a delivery that is impersonal and unbiased. This does not mean that the newscaster should suppress his normal air personality. He should deliver the news at hand in a straight forward, reportorial manner. Tempo should never lag enough to allow an audience to lose interest. Due to the time element involved in newscasts, every item should be concise and to the point, stressing the important factors involved.

It is important, whenever possible, to rehearse the news which will be read for radio or television. In this way the announcer will be assured that his listener or viewer is getting a comprehensive picture, instead of a jumbled mass of information. Many times there will not be an opportunity to look over and study the news thoroughly before approaching the camera or microphone. On these occasions, reading newspapers, preferably aloud, looking up unfamiliar names, keeping abreast of places currently mentioned in the news, will stand the announcer in good stead and save him much embarrassment, as well as spare his audience many unhappy and difficult moments of listening or viewing.

POLICY OF NEWS

Since overseas news is obtained largely from private news-gathering organizations, it must be analyzed and edited carefully by the radio or television news staff. Material supplied by these commercial sources is prepared, primarily, for private customers, such as newspapers, radio and television stations. When used by military organizations, such as Armed Forces Radio and Television Stations, stricter rules of accuracy, balance and fair play prevail.

Any story failing to name its source should be regarded as unsound for official use. “Informed quarters,” “authoritative sources” or “usually reliable sources,” are devices often used to cloak either a dubious source or speculation by the wire service writer. No matter how interesting, speculation must be avoided, as well as predictions of future actions, except where a recognized official in authority is being directly quoted.

Stories about equipment, movements or locations of service units must be viewed in light of security regulations in force within the command at the time of broadcast or telecast.

When politics makes news, it must be reported in such a manner as to keep listeners informed of events at home. In view of the basically controversial nature of such political news, it is important to avoid any involvement of the station, direct or implied, in the issues at stake. Even the appearance of partisanship must be avoided. A partisan statement should be balanced with a statement from the opposition. This is not always possible, as one party will, at times, dominate the news of the day. The opposition, however, will make itself heard, and its views should then be presented. In quoting political utterances it must be clearly indicated where quotations begin and end.

In political news, as well as all other news, Armed Forces Radio and Television Stations will avoid all commentary, editorializing, interpretation, rumor, supposition and speculation.

During national presidential campaigns, AFRTS-LA will supply outlets overseas with transcriptions and films of addresses by presidential candidates of the major parties, and AFRTS-LA and AFRTS-NY will broadcast a balanced coverage of campaign news and addresses by shortwave. Addresses by presidential candidates will be schedul-

ed by local outlets during the most advantageous listening hours. Equal time will be allotted to addresses by candidates of each major political party and adequate advance notice of the date and hour of each broadcast will be given.

SPORTS

Regular sports features should be an integral part of the radio or television schedule. They should include summaries, up-to-the-minute scores, team ratings and batting averages.

For the scheduling of play-by-play accounts of baseball, football, golf, and other sports in season, the New York and Los Angeles Conference Periods and schedules will be invaluable aids to radio Program Directors. Also included in the Conference Period will be advance notice of sports film shipments, which information will be useful to television Program Directors in pre-scheduling plans and advance build-up to viewers.

In addition to play-by-play airings, sports features of an undated nature are also desirable. Feature programs should be developed, covering early history or records of boxing, football or track. All sports news and play-by-play coverage should be offered as frequently as is consistent with the interest of the viewing or listening audience.

It is well to remember that local sports should not be overlooked. These are important events in the military community and they should occupy a key position on the local radio or television program schedule. Play-by-play accounts of these local sporting events, either by tape recorder or direct lines, should be assigned to the sportscaster who genuinely appreciates and knows the sport he is covering for his audience. The sportscaster for these local airings should always be accurate, alert, steady under pressure, and enthusiastic. If he is covering the event for radio, he should be able to translate motion of play into colorful, graphic phrases, creating with ease a series of direct consecutive images for his unseeing audience. If he is calling action for the television camera, he should be an unobtrusive line of continuity, highlighting turning points in the action, assisting the viewer with action he might have missed. He should not dominate and overpower the camera; he should play a secondary role and assist both the camera and the viewer.

The experienced sports announcer will prepare himself thoroughly for a sporting event. All the facts related to the event, the persons involved, their histories, their opinions, their idiosyncrasies, are learned by the announcer before he approaches the camera or microphone. He keeps this material readily available and passes it on to his audience for their more enjoyable and comprehensive understanding of the sporting event he is about to bring to them. Before attempting a play-by-play description of a sporting event, the inexperienced sportscaster should prepare himself by checking the four basic questions noted in the following sample:

1. Information concerning the event?
 - a. What it is: Belmont Sweepstakes, etc.
 - b. Who presents it: Belmont Race Track Association, etc.
 - c. Why is it presented: National Championships, etc.
 - d. When it is: Every spring, etc.
 - e. Where it is: Belmont Park, etc.
 - f. History: 76th Annual Running; who were winners in the past; interesting sidelights; how the event originated, etc.

2. Information concerning the contestants?
 - a. Who they are: Army, Navy, etc., football teams.
 - b. History: Sporting records this year - through the years, etc.
3. Information concerning individual contestants?
 - a. Who they are: Joe Zilch, 225-pound tackle from Dubuque, Iowa, #17 jersey - strong on offense.
 - b. Histories: Zilch is a junior, played for St. Mary's during freshman year, played high school ball in Texas, has blocked three kicks this season, lettered in track last season, etc.
 - c. Idiosyncrasies: Zilch is a fiery-tempered screwball, thrown off the field for fighting in last game, always stands up on line before the shift, to look at opposing team, etc.
 - d. Opinions: Coach says Zilch promises to "murder" them, etc.
4. Information concerning related sporting or social activities?
 - a. What it is: The Tournament of Roses, along with the Rose Bowl Game; half time program, etc.
 - b. Who is responsible: Personnel of Rose Bowl Committee, etc.
 - c. Who participates: Name of Rose Queen, etc.

The foregoing check-off list should not be the only tool at the sportscaster's disposal. It is a readily acceptable fact that proper research and preparation before the event will result in a more listenable or viewable feature. Preparation extending over several days, such as pre-game talks and discussions with coaches and players, is an additional device which will assist the sportscaster in being more articulate and informative at air time. Interviews with participants and coaches should also be considered as part of this preparation for game time. It will serve the purpose, also, of instilling audience interest in the forthcoming event, as well as effectively promoting good relations within the military community. Questions for these interviews should be so planned as to prevent undue rambling. Guests, at all times, should sound, or give the appearance of being, completely relaxed and questions should be what the fans would likely ask, rather than what the sportscaster personally thinks should be asked.

The tape recorder can be used with surprising versatility in play-by-play work, especially if the radio station has a local scheduling problem. A play-by-play broadcast may be aired in its entirety or edited to highlights in order to fit a prescribed time block. There are varying opinions on this editing procedure and what may prove acceptable in one area will be unacceptable in another. The audience should dictate decision on this matter. The same can be said of the actual scheduling of these play-by-play sports events. The audience and the local situation will indicate whether it is more desirable to schedule them during the mid-afternoon or evening hours. As a general rule, sports news is acceptable in early morning, noon, dinner, and late evening time blocks. In all instances, reactions should be analyzed carefully. The majority should decide and the radio or television Program Director should implement their desires to the best of his ability.

SPOT NEWS, FEATURES, SPECIAL EVENTS

There are three main types of broadcast news:

1. Spot News
2. Features
3. Special Events

Spot News and Features are obtained from news teletypes or gathered by the radio or television staff from local sources. These are edited and aired in scheduled news blocks. In the case of local news, alert station personnel will overcome studio limitations by putting to good use the tape recorder or camera. In the case of a teletype news item, with local significance or special interest to the area, it should be standard procedure, wherever feasible, to give the item depth by securing the local background as quickly as possible. Here again, the camera or tape recorder can be used to advantage. In the gathering of Spot News and Features, hometown newspapers, magazines and periodicals should not be overlooked. It must not be forgotten that a radio or television audience is made up of diversified likes, interests, education and previous environments. All these factors must be taken into consideration and must not be geared exclusively to personnel from large cities. Consistent with the needs of the area, items and features of rural interest should be included in order to present a well-rounded service to all listeners or viewers.

Special Events are features prepared outside of the radio or television studio. They will usually include activities of local interest to viewers or listeners, such as a native celebration, a religious ceremony, or a fashion show for servicemen's wives. Coverage of such events by the television station will have understandable limitations, for the simple reason remote equipment will not always be readily available, but feasibility of filming these events for later release, either in their entirety or as inserts, should be thoroughly explored. The audience will always benefit from such enterprising anticipation of their needs and desires. Covering such events by radio, even from remote points, by direct lines or tape recorder, will be relatively simple, but this coverage, too, should be anticipated well in advance, with particular attention on the technical aspects of the pick-up.

In planning a Special Event, the assigned announcer, as well as the technical personnel, should work out details as a team. Surveying the site of the event beforehand, contacting the proper authorities for necessary permissions, checking out equipment in a dress rehearsal, will pay off in dividends of professional-like quality. If interviews are involved, the Special Events announcer should contact the people to be interviewed and ascertain areas to be covered by the questions. He must also remember that the justification for an interview is primarily a story, not just casual unrehearsed sound.

The Special Events announcer is probably the most important cog in the Special Events project. Upon his shoulders rests the quality of the end product and he alone can give it professional dimensions. The following baker's dozen of suggestions should help the Special Events announcer attain a high degree of professional quality in his work:

1. Orient yourself and your audience to the location of the event.
2. Be aware of what happens around you.
3. Relate each sentence to the one which precedes it.
4. Speak in simple sentences.
5. Develop an exact, imaginative vocabulary.
6. Be familiar with the professional terminology of the event to which you are assigned.

7. Be accurate.
8. Avoid cliches and speed mannerisms.
9. Avoid profanity and vulgarity in everyday conversations.
10. Prepare thoroughly before an assignment.
11. Listen to recordings of your ad lib work and check it for clarity, vividness, interest, variety, and accuracy.
12. When possible, compare your recordings with the work of professionals in the field.
13. Practice, by describing aloud everything you see.